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**As given**

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**Lieutenant General Jim M. Kowalski  
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**Moderator:** -- ... bombers, and I think it's increased by approximately 30 percent over the past three years. What does that mean in real terms, and how are you going to keep this up if continuing resolutions and sequestration start to eat into your accounts going forward?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** A lot of the readiness improvements we've seen, and that's measured by our status of readiness reporting, really has been the result of standing up a major command that was focused on this mission area. So we were able to get a lot of what you'd call that low-hanging fruit. Smaller things that would actually make large improvements in readiness.

What we see is a leveling off of that. As we've gotten the easy problems fixed and now we're tackling the harder problems, a lot of those harder problems are personnel, trying to get the exact right experience and the exact right job and the right mix of folks out there. And as we look downstream at the impacts of both the continuing resolution and sequestration, it's pretty clear that there's going to be some degradation there. You can't take the kind of reductions that we'll be looking at and not have a degradation.

At this point without some better fidelity and then the opportunity to figure out in particular how it's going to affect flying hours, it's difficult to extrapolate what is, specifically what kind of readiness decreases that will amount to.

**Moderator:** In February of 2013 are you satisfied with your overall level of readiness or are there still major issues you're trying to address?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Overall we're satisfied with the level of readiness to that.

**Moderator:** We'll begin across with Jeff [inaudible], and then John.

**Reporter:** General, I read that you're concerned about suicides, especially when it comes to remote bases. Can you talk about what Global Strike Command is doing for airmen deployed to these remote bases to curb suicides?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Part of it is implementing all of the larger Air Force resiliency programs, making sure that we're paying attention to the hours that our folks are working. Last year we implemented a review of how many people were on 12 hour shifts. We implemented a review of our 24 hour work centers.

In addition we have stepped out on some programs of our own. We've worked with the USO on trying to get some visits from them to come out to some of the more remote locations, especially during the winter time. We've plussed up the accounts that we have in our services to allow more things for the airmen to do in their free time at these remote locations. We've engaged with the non-profit called American 300 who brings in individuals that have overcome obstacles, like people that have climbed Everest, amputees that have climbed Everest; people that have been Wounded Warriors and then gone on to do incredible things. Have tried to bring together these individuals who have these stories of mental toughness, of overcoming problems and going on and being successful. And the people that we're trying to bring are people that our young airmen can relate to. People from their generation. So we bring in people that participate in X games, Bring in the mixed martial arts fighters, those types of things. And try to give those airmen those stories of how you can overcome problems.

So we've attacked this on a number of fronts. I don't know that you can apply a metric to any of these things other than we can't sit on our hands and wait for this problem to solve itself.

**Reporter:** A follow-up?

Is there a measureable difference among the suicide rates of airmen at remote bases vice non-remote bases?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I think there is. But part of it's the demographic. We have a higher percentage of younger airmen, particularly because of our security forces mission out there in the missile fields and at our weapons storage areas. I don't know that the sample size is large enough to say whether it's based entirely on the fact that you're at Minot Air Force Base or you're at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Warren Air Force Base.

**Reporter:** But is there a delta that you agree on?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I think there is a delta.

**Reporter:** Do you know what it is?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I have an idea of what it is but what I'm not able to tell you is whether or not it's, how much of that is related to the sample size. But in my mind

there's a delta. That's why we've made these additional efforts above and beyond what the Air Force is doing to try to resolve this problem.

**Reporter:** What is the delta?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I would say the delta is higher, and I don't have those numbers with me right now, Mark. But I'd be happy to have another discussion with you separately from this.

**Moderator:** John [inaudible], then Otto.

**Reporter:** We haven't heard a lot about the new bomber. Maybe you can give us an update. Is there an ORD that you and General Hostage are happy with? Any decision on whether there's going to be competitive prototyping? When do you expect to bend metal? Is the middle of the 2020s still doable, reasonable, possible?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I don't know the impacts of sequestration on the long range strike bomber.

Air Combat Command is lead on this so I would probably defer to them and the Rapid Capabilities Office on the specific questions of where the program is at.

We're teamed up with Air Combat Command. They have the lead. We're on their wing going forward. Our role specifically is to bring that bomber expertise to the table and also the nuclear expertise and ensure that that bomber when it comes off the line is nuclear capable.

**Reporter:** Is there an ORD at this point that you're both signed up to and you're both happy with?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Yes.

**Reporter:** And when do you think actual design work will get underway?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** You'd have to talk to the Air Combat Command folks. Sorry.

**Moderator:** Thad [inaudible], and then Frank.

**Reporter:** General, sequestration, a lot of talk about Prompt Global Strike, a new way to reach out conventionally to hit somebody in a hurry. Are you involved in that program? What's your thinking on the kinds of tools you're going to use?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** As far as I know that's not a program of record. That's being run out of OSD. I think AT&L. We are engaged with them and we support their activities in the sense that we discuss ConOps, possible concept of ops, and possible concepts of employment with them. They've kept us informed of the progress as it's going along.

We've also been tracking the technology demonstration efforts. Other than that until it becomes a program of record we're participating but --

**Reporter:** Is it looking more like it's going to be some form of missile? Or a hypersonic air breather? Or --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** You'd have to talk to the OSD folks on how it's shaping up. I've not had a recent review of that.

**Moderator:** Frank Oliveri, then [inaudible].

**Reporter:** I live and work in the Beltway. I'm on Capitol Hill all the time and hear the evils of CR and the combination of CR and sequester together. You're an operational commander out in the field managing issues of the CR. Can you give us some examples of A, how the CR is [inaudible]? And then B, how coupling the CR with sequester, how that further makes things more difficult for you to manage your budgets?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** The continuing resolution hampers us right now in terms of reduced funding for execution of operations. So at this point stockpiles of various kinds of day-to-day operating equipment is starting to decline.

**Reporter:** Tires?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Not so much things that are -- Those are paid for out of flying hour dollars. But things like utility uniforms, flying gear, things that aren't necessarily paid out of flying hour dollars. TDY accounts have been restricted and we're on sort of mission essential kinds of orders right now where we've reduced a lot of TDYs. Just to continue to manage within the continuing resolution.

We've been through this before. This isn't anything new for our budget folks. Even our commanders have all been through it before.

The big impact would be, one of the big impacts, is as you get toward the end of the fiscal year, that's usually when Headquarters Air Force, for me as a major command, is able to release some of the funds that they've held back to pay other bills.

With the combination of a continuing resolution and sequestration, that money would then not come out. That money is usually the funds that we used for some of our facility repairs and sustainment over the next -- So basically a lot of facility kind of work will be limited to safety [inaudible] going forward.

In terms of sequestration, the sent me -- They're grinding through how all of this is going to affect us. The biggest effect is probably on flying hours, I would say. Probably looking at up to a 20 percent reduction in flying hours. And if you take, for example, the B-52 program and look back to fiscal year 2001, so before 9/11, we're already 20 percent lower than the flying hours by crew member. So we'd be looking at another cut on top of that.

**Reporter:** Can I follow up real quick?

Because you have the nuclear mission, are you going to have any kind of priority status after the sequestration?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Those discussions are ongoing. Our UH-1 flying hours right now, our plan is to not reduce those at all. Those provide missile field security support. And as my A-3, my operational folks sit down with the budget guys and they've developed a number of options in terms of how to make sure we meet the strategic command requirements in case we're called on to generate a crew.

**Reporter:** Just real quickly, are your readiness rates showing degradation at this point?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Not yet. Most of the flying hour cuts that we've taken between 2001 and today, we've basically been able to manage that, partially because of the longer sortie duration that bombers are able to fly. We have also gone back and revisited all of our required events and we've gone back and revisited the times that we upgrade people to different positions. So we've been through a couple of reviews already to make sure that we're able to sustain the kind of readiness that we need, proficiency and currency.

**Moderator:** On that same point when your bombers and crew head off to Guam and do bomber presence missions, is that paid for out of your accounts or ACC or PACOM or --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** That's paid for out of our flying hour account. Just like most other COCOM deployments are paid for out of flying hour accounts. This is a SecDef deployment order that dates back to 2003, 2004 and we expect that. What we'll probably do is work with PACAF to reduce the flying hours out there and try to manage their average sortie duration.

It's important for us that we keep the sortie count up. When you execute flying hours it's not just air crew getting activity. You're executing the entire process, and that is people generating airplanes, people fueling airplanes. If you're going to drop weapons it's people arming the airplanes. It's people recovering airplanes. Turning airplanes. Working on parts. Working on engines. All of that is part of what you exercise because that's the engine that we pick up and deploy out to a forward operating base and then provide a combatant commander the sorties.

What we want to do is try to maintain some level of sortie count to maintain readiness across all of those.

What's less visible is you have this constant influx of personnel into this machine. So you've got airmen that are continuing to arrive on a base. If you basically stop flying for three months you are not only going to lose your air crew proficiency, you're going to lose proficiency of all of those maintainers, and as more maintainers show up at the base, brand new out of tech school, where do you get the opportunity to give them the kind of things that they need?

So we're going to have to manage this carefully and we're going to work to keep that sortie rate up so we maintain sort of that foundational readiness.

**Reporter:** May I have one more follow-up?

Are there any silver linings to doing the kind of gaming that you have to do to figure out how to handle sequester or CR? Are there efficiencies that you're actually learning about?

One of the things you just point out, using some of these flights to get training out of them while you're, because of the long duration. But are there other efficiencies that sequester or preparing for sequester or CRs have taught you guys because you've had to change your --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I think that first round of efficiencies under SecDef Gates, I think it was around \$500 billion. That was that first push into that, to drive us to efficiencies.

One of the things that we, it's relatively small, but we went back and re-reviewed the continuous bomber presence and we found about \$21 million a year in savings in that by, instead of rotating squadrons out the way we normally do it, we left the airplanes and left a lot of equipment out there and stopped all this movement both between Guam and the U.S. and then between the bases in the U.S. and saved about \$21 million there.

We've already squeezed efficiencies out in our B-52 because of just the flying hour reductions that have happened over the last ten or twelve years.

In my mind the biggest silver lining, if there's a silver lining to all of this, is that it creates an atmosphere where people are more willing to be innovative. They're more willing to listen to new ideas. Different ideas on how to do things more efficiently. So we at the headquarters are certainly more willing to listen. We put some processes in place to allow airmen and supervisors to pass information up to us. Then we are working a lot of that with Headquarters Air Force in terms of giving Air Force Instructions or other things change to try to become a little smarter about how we're doing business.

**Moderator:** Amy Butler, then Richard.

**DWG:** General, I'm curious. I just wanted to follow on what John asked you. Did you say the Rapid Capabilities Office was involved in the bomber?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** They are the ones who are doing the management there at Headquarters Air Force.

**Reporter:** So can you outline for us what is rapid about this program? Is it requirements generation? Is it going to be the acquisition process? The prototyping?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I'm not an acquisition professional. You'd have to ask them.

**Reporter:** But you are expecting to have something fielded in the mid 2020s?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Barring impact of sequestration, I think the program remains on track for mid-2020.

**Reporter:** As a full squadron then in the mid 2020s or --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I don't know. I think that's some initial production in the mid 2020s.

**Reporter:** And if I could ask you as well, as a follow-on to the trade question, some of the folks in the F-16 community have said that they've, as a result of funding cuts had to prioritize different skill sets, allowing others intentionally in a sense to atrophy if they feel they're a lower priority.

Are you doing that with your bomber fleet? If so, what is being prioritized and what is not being prioritized?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** We actually did this with Air Combat Command under that first round of cuts that was initiated by Secretary Gates where we went back into all of the

different mission areas that we train to in all of our aircraft, not just bombers. And went out to the combatant commanders and say okay, what's most important to you? In other words, as we build this "one to end" list and as we have to make flying hour cuts, what can we drop off the list? Out of that is where Air Combat Command came up with a list of things that they wanted by weapon system. We came up with the ones that we needed for the bombers, the B-2s and the B-52s. And as a result, that's the list that we have going forward. If we have to reduce hours to the point that we stop getting activity for crew members, then we'll go back to that list and say okay, we need to move this below the line and we'll change how often we do that event. It may be one of the things -- Then each thing you evaluate individually. So do you just keep a core group of people proficient in it so that they can train the others in case we're called on to do it? Or is it something you can move to the simulator? So it really depends on the specific mission area you're training for and then the exact event that it is. Then the systems that you have to do the training with and whether you can do it in a simulator or whether you have to actually always do it in the airplane.

**Reporter:** I understand the process that you just outlined, but can you tell us some of the outcomes? What is considered a priority mission today in this world where terrorism is at issue, we've got a distributive set of targets now, not just looking at Russia or China, for example?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** When we did the review the first time, the close air support mission for the B-52, and this is specifically employing the POD and some other things. That one was just below the line when we first went through it. But when we looked at what was going on in Afghanistan and I reviewed it, I moved the close air support part back up above the line because if you had something happen to the B-52, you may actually have a requirement to the -- I mean to the B-1 in the AOR in Afghanistan, then you might have a need to backfill with B-52s. The amount of training and hours that was associated with maintaining that level of proficiency that we wanted to achieve in the close air support set we felt we could do at the reduced funding levels of a year and a half ago. That is the first one that is at the cut line, so that will be the mission set that we'll then go back and address. B-1s have continued to do well. We're about to pull out of Afghanistan so that may be the one that falls below the line, but we still have to go through that assessment.

**Reporter:** What about for B-2? Are there any specific missions that have kind of been reduced in importance and others that have been prioritized?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I'd have to go back and look at the B-2 list. The problem that we tend to have with the B-2 is its flying hours are already relatively low. We use a companion trainer program to maintain proficiency for the air crew. They have a very good simulator. So at this level we don't really seek too much reduction in B-2 flying hours.



Also because the B-2 tends to be the first aircraft to the fight, we're reluctant to do much reduction in B-2 proficiency. But again, until we get a better sense of what the actual reductions are and the impacts would be, we're, this is all notional.

**Moderator:** Richard Logner and then Pat Host.

**Reporter:** Good morning, general. The Air Force Secretary and the Chief of Staff have talked quite a bit about how they're concerned about a hollow force. They've talked about all these documents the reductions that have been made in personnel and equipment. Can you talk specifically to your command, where your cutoff is and what point you reach in terms of the end of war. [Rathbone], we can't do end of mission. What's your bottom line?

Also, can you talk a little bit about your out year budgets? Do they stay relatively flat in this austere budget environment? Do they go down a lot? Do they go up a little bit? Give us a sense of where you are financially.

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I would love to. [Laughter]. I wish I had a better sense of where all this is going.

You go back and you read the law, and it looks like about a nine percent reduction; but then it goes on to say that the MilPers accounts are not part of that, so then it's probably closer to a 13 percent reduction. But then there are other pieces and parts out there that are then not part that can't be cut. So it really becomes what areas are you allowed to take these cuts in? So it's sort of a by-area cut.

It's also at a level larger than I programmed for, so I don't really have a good sense, and that's why we talk about, we know that flying hours O&M are sort of fungible dollars, so that's why we're sort of walking into this thinking we're probably looking at up to a 20 percent reduction.

What we have done in Global Strike Command as of about two or three weeks ago is we've already laid in about a ten percent reduction to our B-52 flying hours to try to get ahead of this a little bit. We think that's reasonable. Average sortie durations of five to six hours. You take a ten percent cut. At the wing and the squadron level they can probably manage that for a little while and then we'll have to see what the impact of that is.

In the longer term how does sequestration and these \$55, \$60 billion cuts a year play out over the FYDP? That's going to be driven back into each service's own corporate process to then reevaluate the programs that they have out there in terms of

modernization and force structure and all the rest of those elements. We've not had those conversations yet.

**Reporter:** Have you done planning that says you're telling the Chief of Staff, here's my bottom line, you can't cut me below this number --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I have a --

**Reporter:** -- number of people.

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** You're touching on a couple of different things. One is the process. The process within the Air Force is a major commands, most of them have one or multiple what we call core function master plans to do this long range planning. My core function master plan is nuclear deterrence operations. So within nuclear deterrence operations and the strategy that I've been given, and frankly, the nuclear forces are different because they are national forces and I think there's less latitude for the Air Force to come up with their own kind of force structure as opposed to conventional weapons.

I can lay out in front of the Chief, here's what the force structure is according to the strategy, and then here's what it costs to sustain that. Here are the risks that we take long term if we don't do these kinds of sustainment activities, and here's the risk long term if we don't start these kinds of modernization activities. So within that, yeah, I do have a "one to end" list. Part of what frankly we're waiting for is to get a better sense from OSD how does the sequestration play out and do they have some additional guidance they want to provide us?

**Reporter:** So that "one to end" list, you can't say where that is? You can't give even a -

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** You can go back to the FY13 plan that is up on the Hill and that's what we've proposed.

**Reporter:** Do you have any specific contracts that will be affected by sequestration? Anything that is about to be signed, has been signed, is a contract you like that could be undone by sequestration?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I'm not aware of how all that plays out.

**Moderator:** Pat Host and Jim Garamond.

**Reporter:** Hi, General. Forgive me if you just said this, but in Air Force Magazine you said that Global Strike Command will almost certainly take some force structure reductions. How much are you preparing for?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I'm not sure I remember that. What was the context for that comment?

**Reporter:** I think maybe just in light of CR, sequestration, future budget reductions. I just remember you saying that Global Strike command was almost certainly going to take some reductions in force.

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Well, I don't know the date of the comment or what it was related to. Clearly we're taking reductions as we comply with the New START Treaty. We are on track and frankly a little bit ahead of schedule, meeting the different requirements of the New START Treaty to include the elimination of the phantom siloes, the elimination of B-52Gs and B-1s down at Davis Monthan. We're proceeding ahead of schedule with the de-MIRV of the systems that are out in the field. And we're awaiting a decision from the Secretary on that force structure plan, what we've told Congress is we will have a bomber force of up to 60 nuclear capable bombers and up to 420 ICBMs. That's about 20 operationally deployed systems too high. You can't go to 60 and 420. So we have engaged through the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and General Kehler and there have been a number of Joint Chiefs tanks on this, and we're still awaiting a decision from the Secretary on what that final force structure number is for our ICBMs.

**Reporter:** Okay.

**Moderator:** Jim?

**Reporter:** Sir, everything you do really depends on some young captain or a tech sergeant who has to get up at zero dark thirty and do these things. And with the uncertainty from the continuing resolution and sequestration I'm just wondering what are they telling you? Are they voting with their feet? Are they, in the '70s the mid-level guys got out and created the hollow force. Is that something you're in danger of from that side in addition to having the readiness issues?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I think there are a couple of components to this. One is, are we worried about retention? The answer is, we watch it. I think it can be a concern. I think it's driven more by the economy than it is driven by the things that they're reading in the media.

We do have to watch our airmen out in the missile fields a little bit. They are in remote locations. They do work, a lot of them do work in adverse weather conditions. I think it

was minus ten over at Minot just the other day, 29 mile an hour gusts. And if you're outside guarding something that's pretty uncomfortable.

So when you read things that are out there on the web or whatever or see it on TV about hey, we're going to get rid of all our nuclear weapons, that sort of gives me a challenge and makes sure that that airman still believes that what he's doing is important. And I think that's what they want.

All those folks out there are going to continue to do a great job but they need to know what to do, and they need to know that what they're doing is important.

So we have been very active in going out and reminding them that what they do is important. The fact that the force structure may change is interesting but it doesn't change the importance of what they're doing day in and day out.

The President in his Prague speech was very clear when he said make no mistake. As long as these weapons exist, we'll have a safe, secure and effective arsenal to deter adversaries and assure allies. That in fact has become the mission statement for our command, safe, secure and effective. And remind them day in and day out that this is one of the most important missions in the military is making sure that this inventory remains safe, secure and effective. And from that perspective, that is something that we continually reinforce with our Airmen. A lot of the things that I say have to do with reinforcing that message to them.

**Reporter:** And they obviously are buying into it. What do they actually --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Well, I think when you look at the retention rates, I don't think you can say it's because of the economy or it's because General Kowalski's such a great communicator. I tend to think it's because of the economy, and I think when the economy turns around you'll find out I'm probably not as great a communicator as I'd like to believe.

But I do think that what we have seen in retention, what we have seen in some of the other metrics we have out there, it's positive. A few years ago our ICBM crew -- And one area we can measure is ICBM crew members. When they get to about the four year point we retain about a third of them in ICBMs and then two-thirds are not required in ICBMs for higher level positions. They in the past have been released to U.S. Space Command to be space operators. What we saw prior to the standup of the command was the reemphasis of the importance of the mission by senior Air Force leadership -- certainly not just me -- was most of them tried to elect to go off to be space operators, and that's not what we've seen since about 2010. We actually are -- We no longer have to non-volunteer people into the ICBM business. We're actually turning people away

because they want to stay. So that's just one indicator I think of how being, how the refocus on this mission set has reminded them that what they do is important.

**Reporter:** Looking ahead, pilots join the Air Force to fly. And in cutting flying hours do you anticipate people saying to heck with this, I can go to United or I can go to someplace else and fly? Are you worried about that? Are you putting things in place now to --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Yes. I think we are. At the Air Force level they're worried about it. Clearly, within Global Strike command, our bomber community is relatively small and we're not the largest share of the bigger Air Force problem of what happens when flying hour cuts get laid in and people that, those younger officers that are there to be aviators have to stand down. It's what we call a leadership challenge, to try to keep them motivated.

**Moderator:** Tony Capaccio, then we'll open things up around here.

**Reporter:** What's the readiness status right now of the B-2 fleet? And it's had a number of aft crack issues over the years because of [inaudible]. You're aware of that. What's the readiness right now? [Inaudible] overall health.

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** The overall health is sufficient to meet the combatant commander requirements.

**Reporter:** Sufficient, but it's not meeting --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** It's not where we would like to see it.

**Reporter:** What is it like the mid 70s now because --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I don't really want to get into the specific numbers. It's too easy to do the math.

**Reporter:** Are you still having issues with the cracking of these things [inaudible]?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** We've been able to manage a lot of that in terms of the ability to go back in and repair. If you're talking about that tail section area --

**Reporter:** Right.

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** We've been able to go back in and repair. We have a modification that's being planned to replace that whole area.

**Reporter:** What's your understanding of the role of the B-2 in the strike on Iranian nuclear facilities? You know the discussion's been a military option that's on the table. What role would the B-2 play in that option?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Let's take this room to Secret and I'll pull out the charts and we'll have -- [Laughter].

I'm not going to talk about that. That's U.S. Central Command business.

**Reporter:** Have you started receiving the upgraded massive ordnance penetrating weapons? The upgraded versions? In September of '11 you said they were completely integrated into the fleet. They've upgraded the bombs, as you know. Have you started to see the upgraded weapons?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** We have the MOP.

**Reporter:** The upgrade version?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Well, we have the MOP.

**Reporter:** Is this fully integrated into the B-2 fleet?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** What do you mean by --

**Reporter:** Integrated so they can drop [inaudible]. Practice.

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Any B-2 can carry MOP. There is not a special integration into each and every --

**Reporter:** They're combat ready, the bombs and the bombers are combat ready?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Yes.

**Moderator:** Frank, then John.

**Reporter:** You just mentioned in an aside the comment about we're getting out of Afghanistan. What I was wondering is, is that something specific you're doing now or were you speaking broadly about by 2014 combat troops will be out of Afghanistan?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** That's just a broad statement that the policy now is --

**Reporter:** -- pulling bombers or things out --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** No. But what I was -- The reason that I've tried to retain, or that I did retain close air support, a higher level of close air support capability on the B-52s was because of the ongoing operations of B-1s and the risk that a problem in the B-1 fleet may in fact drive a requirement for B-2s to go out in the AOR. So we were simply trying to learn forward and be prepared to do that in case there was a request.

That was a year, year and a half ago. As time has gone by, the B-2 fleet has stayed relatively healthy. We're getting closer to 2014, so when I go back and relook at this requirement, that will be one of the things I'll evaluate, is there really going to be a need. And if there was a need, could I in fact get some folks spun up quickly. So those will just be some of the things that we look at within that example of how do you look at specific mission sets as you try to weigh flying hour reductions and maintain some [inaudible] [grades].

**Reporter:** Does the war actually help you on your flying hour problems? I mean if you're flying combat missions, if guys are actually out there flying combat missions, does that help you in a way deal with some of the flying hours?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** We don't have any folks currently in the AOR flying. Our folks are in the Pacific flying. The hours that they fly out there are tagged against the total flying hour program.

**Reporter:** They're not [inaudible]?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Not the ones in continuous bomber presence.

**Reporter:** -- go into theater?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** They don't go to CENTCOM.

**Reporter:** Why after the long break are the B-2s heading back to Guam now?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Because it's been a long break. If you think about it, we're constantly replenishing air crews. They get experience, they move out to other jobs, other responsibilities, and what we had in our B-2 force was a relatively experienced group of crew members from Allied Force, from Enduring Freedom, from Iraqi Freedom, and then that group started doing their role in the continuous bomber presence. When we had the accident and then the engine fire, what we wanted to do is bring the fleet back and get it healthy again because we were also going through a radar modernization program. That was affecting our aircraft availability. And we wanted to bring them back, get them healthy, and then instead of resuming these long-term deployments, instead just experience them by sending them out on two week kind of deployments, closer to what I think we'll be doing long-term as more of a garrison force.

**Reporter:** The Air Force, there was a time when the Air Force lost track of a couple of nuclear weapons and people lost their jobs. But at the time the Air Force was, relatively speaking, awash in cash. Now you're having to find efficiencies, you're having to cut back significantly. Is there an increased danger to tracking these weapons? To making sure that we don't have similar occurrences crop up where a weapon is flown across country and nobody really knew? I'm wondering are there any dangers in keeping the nuclear force safe?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I don't really see an impact on that idea of safe, secure and effective. That is core and foundational to the command. So the fact that we've stood up the command, the fact that we've changed a number of our processes and that we've reemphasized the mission set, and a lot of the reductions that we have taken and we've planned to take are going to be outside of that core nuclear enterprise.

**Moderator:** John Tirpak, Amy.

**Reporter:** A couple of quick hardware questions. The missile you're hoping to get to replace the ALCM, are you envisioning that as both a conventional and a nuclear truck, if you will? A load that can vary between the two?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I think the way that it's been discussed is that if there is a requirement it would certainly, you could certainly spiral off a conventional variant of that missile. Similar to what we did with the ALCM.

When you look at the ranges of JASSM-ER and you look at the ranges that we're anticipating with this missile, you can guess that there's a significant capability here. Of course then --

**Reporter:** I didn't understand what you just meant. The gap --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** No, there's a significant, a greater capability with an LRSO in terms of its range over a JASSM-ER.

**Reporter:** The other one --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** That is General Hostage and Global Precision Attack would be defining those requirements.

**Reporter:** My other question, given the reduced numbers of B-52s and the timing you're going to have to keep them in service, is it more feasible now to consider a re-engining?



**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I would love to re-engine the B-52. Just --

**Reporter:** -- 40 airplanes.

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Where did we get 40 airplanes?

**Reporter:** Well however many there is under the --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** We have 76 and we have four squadrons of 11, so we have 44 that are primary mission. And there are certainly significant advantages to re-engining a B-52. I was on the Joint Staff as an intern in about 1987 and somebody said hey, you're a B-52 guy. Would you look at this proposal? It was a re-engine proposal. I thought that's a great idea. Then they said well, we're not going to have these airplanes that much longer, so we won't do this. [Laughter]. We just celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first flight last year, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last delivery of a B-52, 40 years since Linebacker 2, and we're still flying them. They average about 20,000 hours on the airframe. Boeing products from that era, the '60s, you can easily put 80,000 hours on them. So we think we're going to have it for a long time. In my plan, it will be the premier standoff platform. A B-52 is really similar to your Smart Phone. It's a bomber, but it's also whatever you put on it. You want to do information ops you put canisters with leaflets on it; you want to do jamming you put the miniature air-launched decoy jammer on it. There's been a number of studies to try to put pods on the B-52 to do electronic attack. You can put JASSM-ER on there, you can put JASSM on there. It really is about what you want to do with the airframe. It remains very capable, very flexible. You've got five crew members on board so you can task different things. We've got a POD on the airplane now. There's a lot of life left in the airframe.

It would make sense in an environment where your business case analysis went out to 2040. I don't think we're going to look out to 2040 and I don't think we can make a good business case to re-engine the B-52 given the cost of buying and installing engines.

It uses the TF-33 right now. There's a lot of TF-33s in the inventory. There's no shortage of parts to the engine. So we'll take that efficiency cut and give up some performance we know we could get to stay with something that is affordable to allow us to do other things and concentrate on the weapons as opposed to just putting engines in on them.

**Reporter:** Just to clarify, what did you mean by not going to look out to 2040?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Well, in terms of a business case analysis. The Department won't look out that many years in advance for return on investment or for re-engining a platform.

**Reporter:** Why not, if that's the plan?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Now you're exceeding, but I know that return on investment limit doesn't really go out 30 years. I think it's a closer in range.

**Reporter:** Do you have a requirement to basically get your money back within a certain period of time? What's the period?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I'd have to get back with you. I'd have to get one of my AA folks.

**Moderator:** Amy, and we'll finish with Gabe.

**Reporter:** Thank you. I just wanted to follow up on something you said to John. You mentioned JASSM-ER, that's advertised at 500 nautical miles range, and then LRS option. What kind of range are you looking for for that weapon?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** We're looking at ranges closer to the current air-launched cruise missile range.

**Reporter:** Can you be more specific?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** No.

**Reporter:** Is there a reason?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I'd have to see what's already been put out there. The Department's been pretty close-hold on that.

**Reporter:** But exceeding JASSM-ER range.

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Yeah.

**Reporter:** Okay. Significantly exceeding it?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Yes.

**Reporter:** Okay. And then as a follow-on to Tony's question, talking about the MOP. Are you satisfied that you have the appropriate penetration capability to prosecute the kind of targets you need to prosecute today and in the near-term future? Or do you need additional capability? If so, what do you need?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** You probably want to talk to the combatant commander on that. We're integrating MOP, we're training people in the MOP. The MOP is a penetrating

weapon. In terms of that larger issue of can you cover every hardened target with a MOP, that's, I don't think you can. But I also don't want to get into Central Command's or any of the other combatant commanders' targeting.

**Reporter:** As the commander who's required to maintain and keep the force current, you have a valuable opinion. Could you share it with us?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** My opinion is the MOP is an extremely capable weapon against hardened and deeply-buried targets.

**Reporter:** So you have two choices. You don't want something new or you do. What do you choose? I've never met a commander who doesn't want something new, so I'm just curious if you can specify.

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** This is really not the environment to be running around wanting new things.

**Reporter:** No, but --

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I'm comfortable with where we're at today with our B-2 and our B-52 and the weapons that we have currently in the pipeline. I'm more interested in retaining the things that we've already programmed and executing the plan that we've already invested a lot of time and effort in than in pursuing the next great thing. I think that's a common malady in all of government which is we don't, we lack a discipline of execution sometimes and we don't take things to conclusion before we're distracted by the next shiny object. And I'm not distracted by shiny objects. I've got a longer range plan and I know the systems that are out there and the plan that we want to execute is consistent with the strategy.

**Reporter:** Thank you.

**Moderator:** General, if we can dedicate two minutes to two questions, we'll get out of here on time. Gabe, and then Todd.

**Reporter:** I wanted to ask you real quickly about the UH-1. [Inaudible] to get a replacement helicopter for that [inaudible] gone away. Do you see any prospect for getting that helicopter replaced here in the next few years with the budget situation that we've got?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** No. Not in the next few years. I think at this point what we're doing is we're working with SAF-AQ and we're talking the combat rescue helicopter replacement, the CRH.

**Reporter:** What's the possibility of Global Strike Command maybe joining that effort?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** That's one of the things that we're evaluating, is whether we can just follow on with that as it moves through the process. Frankly, this is sort of the shiny object discussion I just had with Amy.

At this point I'm focused really in the short range on bringing the UH-1 up to the level that it requires. So night vision goggle compatible cockpit, getting the right kind of FLIR capability. When I look out at how we do missile field security, we have over the last eight, ten years, we've fielded a number of different systems that are very good at what they do, but what we've not really done yet is integrate them across. So we've got a lot of lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan over the last 12 years on battlespace awareness, and how to push information from one sensor to an operator; and we need to take advantage of that. We think there are some relatively low cost ConOps and tactics and procedures that we can do out there that will allow us to take advantage of what we've been learning.

**Reporter:** So you think you'll have the money to make those modernizations as you train folks to use the new system?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** It's relatively small dollars. Right now I would say yes. At the end of March I might have a different answer.

**Moderator:** Todd Jacobson, final question.

**Reporter:** I just wanted to ask you about the status of the B-61 [inaudible] program with all the talk about sequestration and budget cuts. What's the level of comfort you have that [inaudible]? Are you expecting [inaudible]?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I can't speak for the Department of Energy in terms of where they're at. My last understanding was they have budgeted for the B-61 LEB, but I don't know the impacts of sequestration on them.

**Reporter:** Real quick if I could. There's a lot of talk about nuclear reductions inside the [inaudible] Obama administration? You've suggested that we be somewhat cautious in reducing below New START levels. Are you comfortable with the path that the administration's on?

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** Well, the caution that I had put out there was in the context of levels that were in the Global Zero kind of report. There are numbers out there, 300 to 400 and when you start talking about those kind of numbers you're talking about major structural changes to how we do this business. Can you experience the right number of personnel? And again, I'm looking at it from the perspective of the person that's

charged with organize, training, equipping, and making sure that it's safe, secure and effective.

Can I get enough experienced personnel to fill out all the organizations that provide guidance, oversight, training, et cetera? Do we have enough work for the intellectual infrastructure that we have out at the laboratories? And can we sustain the laboratories that we have? Because those are valuable, not just for the nuclear deterrence, but they're valuable to the nation across a number of different areas of science and counter-proliferation and counter-WMD. Then there's an industrial base concern which is at what point do the highly experienced major corporations do something else? And can you maintain the same level of quality, surety, certification, et cetera, et cetera, as you go out and try to replace components in aging weapon systems.

Those are really my concerns. Frankly, between -- Can you go below 1550? What I say is yeah, I think there's some head room there. Whether you do it in parity with Russia I think depends on what kind of numbers you're talking about. But at the end of the day these are national level decisions that will be made by political leadership that will involve the changes in strategy. Then I'll have my guidance to march out on.

The strategy that I have now, the force structure that we have now matches it.

**Moderator:** We're out of time.

**Lt. Gen. Kowalski:** I'll take one more. I feel bad for coming in late.

**Moderator:** Do we have one more?

Again, thank you for coming in. We appreciate it. Good luck.